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Mechinat Keshet Yehuda, Scholarship Fund-2013-2014

Name of program

Mechinat Keshet Yehuda, Scholarship Fund

Year of activity

2013-2014

Name of the report's writer

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Resource Development

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Status of program

The Mechina, now in its 25th year, is one of Israel's most well established mechinot, with over 2,000 alumni. We have several programs at the mechina, shana aleph, shana bet and a program for overseas students. This year our overseas students are mostly from the US, although some have already made Aliya with their families. They are learning, training, studying in Ulpan and participating in the Help for the Holocaust survivors program.

The mechina has recently completed construction on a Memorial Educational Facility. We are in the midst of raising funds for the furnishings of this building including, chairs, tables, desks, shelves, books and a computer center. The building will also contain a new Beit Midrash.

Main achievements during the last year of activity

The last year has seen several changes at the mechina. A new Rosh Mechina was enstated alongside Rav Yaacov Feigenbaum. Rav Benstion Hameiri is considered a strong driving force, much loved by his students. Rav Yaacov continues to serve as President and spiritual guide to the mechina while Rav Bentsion oversees the day to day education aspects of the mechina. The balance between these two leaders creates a dynamic and more diverse environment at the mechina.

In the year 2013-2014 the breakdown of our student body was:

Shana alef - 57 students

Shana bet- 36 students

Aliya and Integration Program – 11 students

Beyond their regular daily schedule, the students participated in many educational and navigational field activities.

- Galil series – three days of exercises in the Galil focused on improving students' navigational abilities and to deepen their knowledge of this part of Israel – its geography and its ancient and more recent military history
- Navigation of the Gilabon – This was our first off campus activity. The exercise in the Gilabon nature Reserve designed to allow our students to get to know each other and to forge team spirit
- Tsfat series- A weekend in this mystical city where students meet old and new.
- Slichot- in the moment before the Jewish New Year, students visit the city of Tiberius at night and get a taste of the varied population in synagogues of the many diverse residents.
- Acco- At the end of Yom Kippur, our students visit the Jewish residents of the city of Acco and hear their stories.
- Navigational Exercises – Three days in Mitzpe Ramon area getting to know this unique geological formation
- Coast to Coast- three days of exercises where students must navigate by map and arrive at designated positions.
- Field visits for second year students- The shana bet boys got to improve their knowledge of the Northern border and over two days visit army bases along that border

As every year, our students both work and volunteer within the Keshet community and beyond. Many of our students chose to work in the various agricultural sectors of the moshav. This experience enables them to feel connected to the soil which nourishes us and gives them a new appreciation for the process by which the state of Israel grows food for itself. It also connects them specifically to the land of the Golan, a far out often forgotten corner of Israel that is vital to the security of our country.

Our students are grateful for the hospitality of Moshav Keshet. Students and show their gratitude by volunteering in the preschool, at the elementary school, or even playing football with the local children. Students of the overseas program also participate in the “Help for Holocaust Survivors” project. These boys have adopted six Holocaust survivors in Haifa whom they visit on a biweekly basis. They bring food and supply for the survivors, most of whom do not have family of their own and are not well cared for by municipal social services. They help the survivors any way they can, doing home improvement and small jobs around their homes but most importantly alleviating the loneliness from which most of the survivors suffer.

Evaluation

The mechina evaluates its performance every year on several different levels.

First and foremost, we are examined four times a year by an independent accounting firm that reviews our income and expenditure and ensures that our activity is entirely legal, fiscally responsible and is also directed towards achieving our mission as a premilitary academy.

The staff holds weekly meetings to ensure that our activities always are in line with our educational goals and to ascertain that each student is receiving the attention and support that he needs. It is our goal to ensure the high quality of each course and activity and to be certain that students are both satisfied and actively participating in the various areas of mechina life.

Although the Mechina does encourage its graduates to be drafted into combat units in Tzahal and aspire to positions of command when possible, we do not consider these accomplishments to be the indicators of our success. We consider our program successful when graduates feel that they have grown, explored their historical and spiritual heritage, and face the challenges of Tzahal and life with more confidence and with tools to help them cope. We measure success by polling our students, basing our findings exclusively on student opinion. It is also of utmost importance to the mechina that we poll student satisfaction not just immediately upon program completion but also further into the future. Almost 90% of alumni continue to have contact with the mechina in the years after graduation. Each staff member has hours specifically devoted to maintaining relationships with alumni. All alumni are also invited to participate in activities held in several parts of the country on a regular basis and to participate in retreats that are held at our campus in the Golan. Alumni come for Shabbat at the mechina along with their families; Most credit the mechina with being a most meaningful influence on who they are today.

In conclusion, student satisfaction is on par with levels of previous years. We hope that the changes at the Mechina will see a continuation of this trend.

Others

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

Our goals for the next school year include ensuring that the mechina continues to grow. The newly completed Memorial Educational Facility provides the actual physical space that allows us not just to accept more students but ensure that their physical surroundings will be comfortable.

We see that the educational goals that we have established are well received and we are generally content with the mechina's performance. Our students are satisfied and an ever growing number of them choose to stay and study shana bet, for a second year before being drafted.

With the support of the Matanel Foundation the mechina was able to absorb x students who were unable to afford the full price of tuition, while at the same time maintaining a high level of activity and a fiscally balanced budget.

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